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OLD ENGLISH POTTERY AND CHINA IN AMERICA

BY ALICE MORSE EARLE.

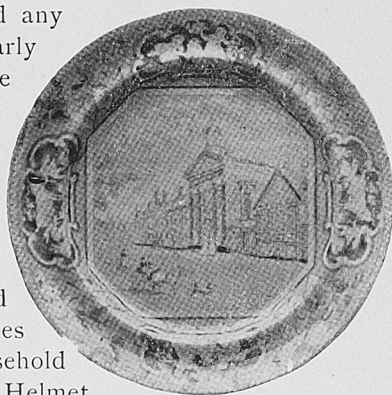
With illustrations.



AN ENGLISH DRAGON.

THE earliest ceramic wares for table use imported to this country were tortoise-shell and Delft. Pieces of good old Delft have been found in considerable numbers in New York and Connecticut, usually decorated in blue with a little yellow. But the tortoise-shell is very rare, and is chiefly sought after on account of the curious shapes in which it is found—cows, birds, baskets, cradles, etc. China was not seen on the table even of well-to-do people in America until the trade of England, and then of America with China, brought to our port the pottery of the Orient.

Our grandmothers were great tea-drinkers, and had teacups and teapots long before they had any other forms of china. Black teapots were in early days supposed to make the best tea. One of the commonest form of teapots found in old-time homes was what is now known as Lowestoft—really Chinese-ware—brought over in vast numbers from 1795 to 1840 and landed in Salem, Newport, Providence, New Haven, and New York, in the days when the commerce with China was the largest business venture in the United States. Old blue Canton china came also in boxes and bales and crates, and rivalled in every household the English willow-ware and dragon-ware. Helmet creamers are often found in Canton china.



PEMBROKE COLLEGE.

Occasionally an old English punch-bowl found its way in the eighteenth century across the ocean to enliven company in the New World. A very jolly one of Staffordshire pottery bears the picture of two fat men marching and wiping their foreheads with handkerchiefs. It has this rollicking motto :

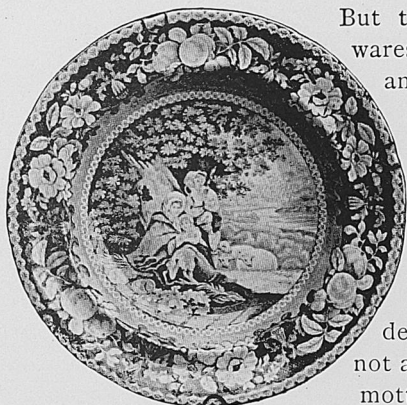


LANDING OF LAFAYETTE.

"From London to Highgate behold the Array
Of Two Hearty Trenchermen now on the way,
Three Pounds they'd devour besides Beef and Bread,
Who the Devil will keep them at Twelve Pence a Head?"

A jovial companion pitcher says to passers-by :

"From Mother Earth I took my birth,
Then form'd a Jug by Man
Now I stand here filled with good cheer
Taste of me if you can."



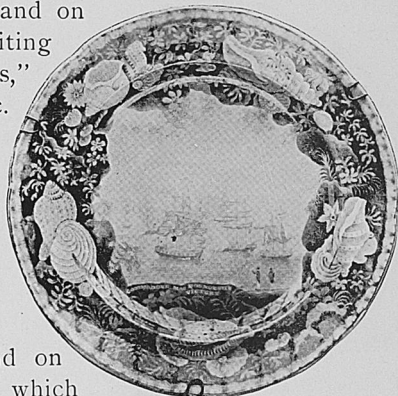
THE SHELTERED PEASANTS.

But the manufacture of English-ware was constantly increasing and improving, and the English potters of the early part of this century were very ready to take advantage of the burning patriotism of the new nation of the United States by manufacturing pieces of pottery and porcelain for exportation to the United States bearing patriotic designs and portraits of American heroes, and were not at all sensitive about printing with these designs mottoes and sentiments often decidedly derogatory to their own nation and countrymen. Washington,



TOMB OF FRANKLIN.

Franklin, and Lafayette were the American heroes whose presentments were most frequently seen ; after the death of the former, mourning designs in funereal black, of monuments, urns, open graves, weeping willows, etc., were in high fashion, and must have appeared in every china cupboard and on every table, bearing the lugubrious and dispiriting mottoes, "We mourn our loss," "America in Tears," "Sacred to the Memory of Washington," etc. About forty so-called "Washington designs" are now known. One portrait, taken from a painting by Gilbert Stuart, is so good a likeness that, known as the "Pitcher Portrait," it has quite a place in history, as is recorded in Lossing's "Mount Vernon and its Associations."

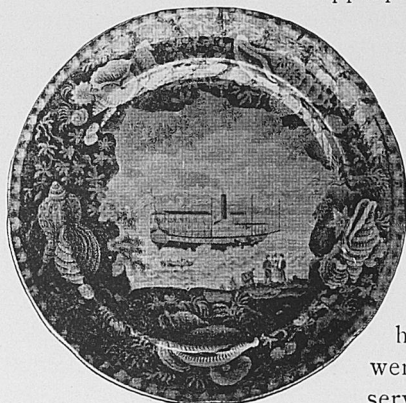


MCDONOUGH'S VICTORY.

These patriotic designs are usually found on pitchers of what is known as watermelon shape, which is now almost obsolete. Another favorite decoration was Masonic designs ; and American sailors were very fond of bringing home to their wives and sweethearts Naval Pitchers or Sailor Pitchers, often with appropriate mottoes, such as

"D'ye see a cherub sits smiling aloft
To watch o'er the fate of poor Jack."

"The troubled main, the wind & rain,
My ardent passion prove,
Lashed to the helm, should seas o'erwhelm,
I'll think of thee, my love."

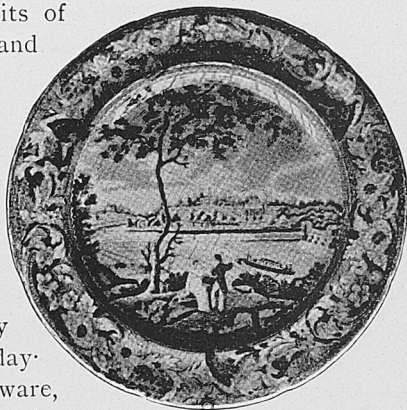


TROY LINE STEAMSHIP.

The triumphal visit of Lafayette in 1824 finds a lasting commemoration on the china made in his honor. His home at La Grange, his landing at Castle Garden, his portrait—all were placed on portions of tea, dinner, and toilet services. The opening of the Erie Canal is remembered by six different designs, and in the bor-

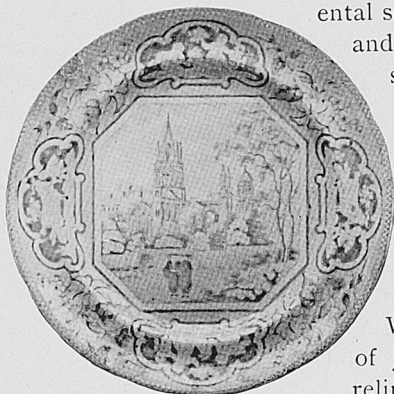
ders of the plates appear the medallion portraits of Lafayette, as well as of Jefferson, Washington, and De Witt Clinton.

It is a curious fact that for nearly half a century there was manufactured in England for the American market an entire line of decorated stone-ware and pottery, in such vast amounts that this American trade must have formed the most important item in the sixty or seventy Staffordshire pot-works whose stamps and marks are found on the many pieces that have been preserved even to this day. For about thirty years a beautiful dark blue ware, decorated with portraits and views, came here in great amount. This ware is practically unknown among English collectors and china manufacturers. For our market it was made, with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of different designs ; Italian, French and Ori-



FAIRMOUNT PARK.

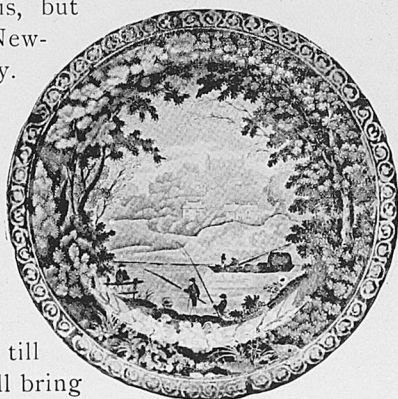
ental scenery ; views of English buildings and scenery and historical places ; classical and scriptural designs, copies of famous paintings, illustrations of books, views of American buildings and scenery. There are forty views known of Boston and vicinity, twenty-five of Philadelphia and the Schuylkill, twenty of New York. I have seen over two hundred in all.



CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

The most satisfactory pieces, those richest in color, came from the potteries of Enoch Wood, of Burslem ; of the Ridgways, of Hanley, of Joseph Stubbs, and of James Clews. The latter relinquished a well-established business in England to start a similar venture in America, but he made a dire failure.

About half a century ago the best tea-china of every well-to-do country home was a fine china of clear white grain decorated in a pink or copper-colored lustre. I have seen salt-cellars and pepper-pots of this, but never dinner services. This china was made at Newcastle and at New Hall works in vast quantity. Nearly all of it is unmarked. Occasionally a piece is seen with the words "New Hall" in cursive letters, sometimes enclosed in a ring. The New Hall pieces often had an additional decoration of vines and leaves and flowers in gay colors, and are really beautiful. This lustre ware is not as old as many suppose. The New Hall works were in existence in 1782, but they did not take a patent for metallic lustre till 1814. In England marked specimens of New Hall bring a high price—sometimes £2 for a cup and saucer. They



WINDSOR CASTLE.



QUADRUPED PLATE.

are not so valuable here. Within a few years coarse reproductions of this lustre china have been made; and the lustre pitchers of coarse pottery, with green, brown, yellow, pink, and purple lustre, are now also made. The "silver china" teapots, sugar-bowls, and creamers of solid silver lustre resembling in



TOMB OF WASHINGTON.

shape as well as color, silver pieces, are not made to-day to my knowledge. Solid "copper china" also is seen. These pieces are often seventy-five years old.

Willow-pattern ware is often found in old houses. This pattern was invented at Caughley, England, in 1780, by Thomas Turner; so pieces of willow-ware cannot be two hundred years old, as frequently asserted. The pattern is modeled after a Chinese design. The older pieces made at Caughley are very valuable. They are marked with a crescent-shaped C, an S, or word Salopian. The cups are ribbed and

have no handles; and the plates are eight-sided, with the corners rounded off.

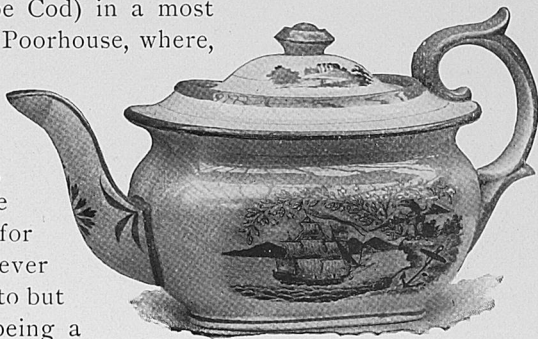
For the specimens of these the collector cannot go to any modern importer; they must be bought in second-hand or bric-a-brac shops, or better still, in country homes where time and wear have spared them to this day.

The acquisition of old china is not the only pleasure obtained through china collecting in this country; the

sad, humorous, astounding, and pleasing sides of country life are all displayed to the fullest extent through the china-hunt. And what may not happen to the china-hunter, from encounters with virtuously savage watch-dogs, to incipient love-affairs with mourning widowers; and in what spot may not the lot of your evening hours be cast—from occupying a deserted house to being entertained (as you must be if you drive to a certain town on Cape Cod) in a most hospitable manner at the County Poorhouse, where, through the retrospective memory of an ancient, decayed gentleman and of an inquisitive dwarf, the only regular guests at that unique hostelry, you may find, as we did, clues to the acquisition of some much longed-for china treasures—and also have forever the memory of an experience known to but few (for so short a time)—that of being a willing and eager lodger at an almshouse.



STAFFORDSHIRE OLD BLUE.



AMERICA TRIUMPHANT.